

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EA-07 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00
EB-08 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02
OPIC-03 SP-02 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 OES-06
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SS-15
AGRE-00 EPA-01 IO-13 /121 W
-----111630Z 008512 /45

R 111116Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6448
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE
AMEMBASSY VICTORIA
CINCUSNAVEUR
COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0118

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT MP
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - FEBRUARY 11

REF: PORT LOUIS 0093

SUMMARY. PORT LOUIS 0117 PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THIS CABLE.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE MAURITIAN CONSUMER RECEIVED ANOTHER BLOW THIS WEEK WHEN THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED INCREASES IN THE COST OF BUS TICKETS OF FROM 7 PERCENT TO 25 PERCENT FOR LONGER DISTANCE RIDES, THOUGH NO CHANGE FOR SHORT RIDES. THE OPPOSITION PRESS LABELLED THE ACTION "SCANDALOUS" AND DECRIED EVEN MORE THE LACK OF BUSES THAT HAS CAUSED COMMUTERS TO WAIT HOURS FOR RIDES. THE GOVERNMENT DECISION FOLLOWED A STUDY BY THE FINANCE MINISTRY WHICH SHOWED THAT ONLY THREE BUS COMPANIES ARE MAKING A PROFIT
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CURRENTLY. THE INCREASED TICKET PRICES WILL PERMIT THEM ALL TO MAKE "A REASONABLE PROFIT," IT SAID. THE GOVERNMENT THREATENED TO LICENSE NEW, COMPETING BUS COMPANIES IF SERVICE DOES NOT IMPORVE.

2. ON FEBRUARY 6 THE LIBERIAN BULK CARRIER, "GRAND BETELGUESE", 22,000 DWT, WENT AGROUND ON A REEF OUTSIDE FORT WILLIAM NEAR

THE SOUTHWEST SIDE OF THE ENTRANCE TO PORT LOUIS HARBOR. THE VESSEL WAS ON A VOYAGE FROM PORT ELIZABETH TO JAPAN CARRYING 16,000 TONS OF MANGANESEORE AND STOPPED AT PORT LOUIS FOR ENGINE REPAIRS. THE GOM IS CONCERNED THAT THE SHIP'S 630 TONS OF FUEL OIL MAY POLLUTE THE HARBOR. AS OF FEBRUARY 11 THE VESSEL WAS STILL ON THE REEF. AN EAST GERMAN SEA-GOING TUG, THE "OCEANIC," HAS ARRIVED IN PORT LOUIS TO ATTEMPT TO REFLOAT THE GROUNDED VESSEL. (SEE PORT LOUIS 105)

3. THE PRESS HAS REPORTED THAT THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE VILLAGE COUNCIL ELECTIONS TO BE HELD IN APRIL. NO EXPLANATION WAS OFFERED, BUT THE MMM MAY FEAR A DEFEAT BY THE LABOR PARTY WHICH WOULD DAMAGE ITS IMAGE AS A "WINNER"

4. AN ASSEMBLY OF MMM DELEGATES MET FEBRUARY 6 AND APPROVED AN ELECTORAL STRATEGY FOR THE APRIL MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. THE PARTY WILL RUN WITHOUT ALLIANCES BUT WILL INCLUDE CANDIDATES FO THE "PETITE ET MOYENNE BOURGEOISIES" TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE "REALITIES" OF THE CLASS SITUATION IN THE URBAN ELECTORATE AND TO ATTRACT MIDDLE CLASS VOTERS TO THE PARTY. A NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE WILL BE ELECTED IN ABOUT SIX WEEKS. THE GROUP WILL BE ENLARGED TO 35 MEMBERS. TWENTY WILL REPRESENT THE 20 ELECTORAL DISTRICTS OF THE COUNTRY AND THE OTHER 15 (ONLY FIVE OF WHOM MAY BE ASSEMBLY MEMBERS) WILL BE ELECTED ON A "NATIONAL" LIST BY THE ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES. (COMMENT: THE LATTER PROVISION IS PROBABLY DESIGNED TO ASSURE THAT PAUL BERENGER WILL CONTINUE TO BE ABLE TO DOMINATE THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE BE TAKEN OVER BY THE MMM
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ASSEMBLY MEMBERS THEMSELVES, SOME OF WHOM ARE LESS THAN MILITANT MARXISTS.)

5. DRONASINGH SEEKUN, HEAD OF THE BAKERY OWNERS UNION AND DEFEATED MMM CANDIDATE IN THE DECEMBER ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, HAS BEEN EXPELLED FROM THE MMM BY DECISION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. SEEKUN'S DEMAND FOR A RISE IN THE PRICE OF BREAD WAS DEEMED "INCOMPATIBLE" WITH THE VIEWS OF THE MMM, WHICH FAVORS INSTEAD GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES TO KEEP THE PRICE DOWN OR NATIONALIZATION OF THE BAKERIES.

6. L'EXPRESS PREDICTS THAT THE LABOR-PMSD GOVERNMENT WILL CALL NEW LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN JULY IN AN ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN A MUCH STRONGER MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT. JULY WILL BE THE DATE, THE PAPER SAYS, BECAUSE THE GOVERNING COALITION WANTS TO HOLD ELECTIONS BEFORE THE NEW REGISTRATION OF VOTERS IN AUGUST WHICH WOULD ADD ABOUT 20,000 EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLDS TO THE ROLLS. L'EXPRESS SAYS THE RESULTS OF THE APRIL MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WILL INDICATE WHETHER HOLDING NEW NATIONAL ELECTIONS

IN JULY WILL BE A WISE MOVE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE.

7. MINISTER OF LABOR YOUSUF MOHAMED, SON OF THE LONG-TIME LEADER OF THE MUSLIM COMMITTEE OF ACTION (CAM), HAS ASKED TO JOIN THE LABOR PARTY. THIS WILL PROBABLY MEAN THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE CAM FROM THE POLITICAL SCENE. IN THE DECEMBER ELECTIONS ONLY ONE CAM CANDIDATE WAS ELECTED, AS THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY VOTED MASSIVELY FOR THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT. THE CAM MAY SURVIVE AS A SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANIZATION, BUT IN THE NEXT ELECTIONS THE LABOR PARTY WILL PROBABLY RUN SOME MUSLIM CANDIDATES UNDER ITS WON BANNER.

8. THE LABOR PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WILL MEET ON FEBRUARY 20 TO DECIDE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, ITS FUTURE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CAM. ACCORDING TO L'EXPRESS, THE GROUP OF YOUNGER LABOR MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY PLAN TO EXERT A GREATER INFLUENCE ON PARTY POLICIES IN THE FUTURE.
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THEY FIND IT CONTRARY TO THE PARTY CONSTITUTION THAT ONE ETHNIC GROUP (THE MUSLIMS) IS EXCLUDED FROM THE PARTY, BECAUSE OF THE ALLIANCE AGREEMENT BETWEEN LABOR AND THE CAM.

9. L'EXPRESS REPORTE DFORMATION OF A NEW ORGANIZATION CALLED THE "LABOR TASK FORCE" HEADED BY MR. VARMA, WHICH CLAIMS IT HAS ESTABLISHED 100 CELLS OF 10 MEMBERS EACH. IT IS ANTI-COMMUNIST, WILL WORK TO SUPPORT THE LABOR PARTY, AND IS RECOGNIZED UNOFFICIALLY BY DR. RAMGOOLAM, THE PAPER SAID.

10. THE PRESIDENT OF THE MAURITIUS MUSLIM DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE HAS SENT A TELEGRAM AND LETTER OF PROTEST TO PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA OF MADAGASCAR OVER THE MASSACRE OF MUSLIM COMORIANS IN MAJUNGA. HE ALSO PROTESTED THE ATTITUDE OF THE MALAGASY AUTHORITIES AND THE WARM WELCOME ACCORDED MMM LEADER BERENGER ON HIS RECENT VISIT. THE LETTER ACCUSED RATSIRAKA AND BERENGER OF TRYING TO INTRODUCE COMMUNISM IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD UNDER THE GUISE OF SOCIALISM. THE PROTEST WAS HEAVILY PUBLICIZED IN THE PRO-GOVERNMENT PRESS.
KEELEY

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Message Attributes

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